

The Individual

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM

APRIL 1993

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The Lord Monson

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Professor Peter Campbell

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Council:
Dr. J.B. Bracewell-Milnes

Time Gentlemen Please!

HOME SECRETARY KENNETH Clarke is in the process of reviewing the laws governing pubs and bars in England & Wales. Already mooted for the chop are the laws banning under 14 year olds entering public houses and the farcical, costly polls taken each year on whether Sunday drinking should be allowed in Wales. The Government would do well to take a bold deregulatory approach, and SIF members would do well to inform their MPs of the case.

Ultimately pub owners should be free to set their own hours of business, subject to the possibility of having their license withdrawn for failure to keep order. This would be a politically popular move, extending freedom to millions of ordinary British drinkers. It would also put an end to the practice of last minute binge drinking which makes our streets so dangerous at 11.30pm on a Friday night.

The Editor

For Your Diary

Wednesday 28th April: Professor David Myddelton will talk on his forthcoming book *The Power to Destroy: A Study of the British Tax System*, 6.30pm *Cafe Italien*, Charlotte St. (details enclosed).

Wednesday 2nd June: Marc-Henri Glendenning, founder of *DIVERSITY* - the campaign for lifestyle freedom, will talk on *Political Correctness: What it is and How to Combat It*, 6.30pm at *Soho Soho*, Frith St., London (details enclosed).

Thursday 10th June: House of Lords Luncheon with Jonathan Aitken MP, Minister of State for Defence Procurement. Please return the enclosed booking form.

Wednesday 30th June: Socialist MP, Mark Fisher, will speak on the topic *The Right to Know - Freedom of Information*. 6.30pm, The Red Lion Pub, Parliament St., London SW1.

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Editorial

IT IS FITTING THAT THIS FIRST ISSUE OF THE "NEW LOOK" *The Individual* should open with an article by former Editor, Professor Peter Campbell. Professor Campbell has now taken up the role of Chairman of the Society, thereby enabling Sir Richard Body to concentrate on his valiant efforts to halt the ratification of the federalist Maastricht Treaty.

In his *Freedom & Public Policy* Professor Campbell reviews the areas of policy that members have strong views on. In doing so, our Chairman raises the question of which issues the Society should seek to campaign on in the future; for the SIF's future rests on becoming an effective campaigning organisation for the cause of individual liberty. On most issues, members will share an underlying set of principles - reducing the role of the state, and promoting more personal freedom and responsibility. On some matters members will differ sharply, particularly "moral" issues such as euthanasia and abortion. Positions on these issues tend to be unconditional, based on deeply held beliefs. For instance, on the issue of abortion one has to balance up a woman's "right to her body" with a child's "right to life"; both sides in the debate can easily define their cases in terms of pro-freedom arguments.

If the Society is to renew its campaigning role, then undoubtedly the most pressing issue of concern is the Maastricht Treaty - which should be fought against tooth and nail. As Rodney Atkinson points out in *The Threat of Euro-Corporatism*, any future European Union will be founded on notions of the role of the state that are completely alien to individualists. Yet Maastricht should be opposed not simply on free-market grounds but also because it threatens to destroy the British nation-state. The belief in individual freedom and national freedom are inseparable; the English love of liberty is rooted in the history of our nation - should Britons lose their sense of identity how long will it be before they lose their high regard for the free society?

This tying in of the need for identity and liberty was a core theme in the sixties cult TV series *The Prisoner*, reviewed in this issue by Glenn Granger. Throughout the series, the technocrats and bureaucrats seeking to break the character of the hero constantly try to destroy his sense of identity. Ultimately in each episode, the hero remains a prisoner but retains his sense of identity and ethics. As the survival of underground churches in the former Communist bloc has shown - the truly principled human spirit can never be crushed.

If ethics have the ability to survive adverse political forces, then the abuse of ethics is surely an area of deep concern for all who value a free society? Professor Norman Barry, highlights one such example of the use of values to undermine the market economy in his *Business Ethics, Prosperity & Liberty*. The insidious process whereby businesses are being pressurized to act according to a higher set of ethics than those expected of ordinary citizens poses a very real threat to prosperity and liberty.

One industry that has fallen prey to business ethics is that of pharmaceuticals which is stifled by over-regulation. The long term future of the industry's ability to be innovative is now seriously under threat by repressive controls. Peter Jackson, in his *Access to Medical Information* makes an admirable case for greater openness and accountability to the customer in health care yet many members may feel somewhat uneasy about any calls for Nanny State to place yet more legislative burdens on the shoulders of pharmaceutical companies.

The Editor

OBITUARY

Lord Ridley of Liddesdale

The Society mourns the death of Lord Ridley of Liddesdale, a former member.

Nicholas Ridley was a man of outstanding integrity, a true patriot and a passionate spokesman for the cause of freedom.

In 1970 he was one of a group of nine SIF members to enter the Heath Government. Within two years he had resigned out of disagreement with the growing interventionism of the Government and had formed the Selsdon Group of free-market Conservatives.

Nicholas Ridley was the evangelist of Thatcherism throughout the eighties. As a key minister in the Thatcher Governments he pushed through many of the momentous reforms of that decade.

Since resigning from Government in 1990 over controversial comments on the German domination of the EC he grew ever more disillusioned with the course of politics. An early enthusiast for the Common Market, he soon recognised the undesirable federalist nature of the Maastricht Treaty.

Lord Ridley was also alarmed by the Nanny State implications of the new "health" & "environmental" lobbies. This growing movement he referred to as the new Puritanism;

"The strange thing about this new Puritanism is that it is not directed at upholding the interest of society as a whole; rather it is a crusade to stop others doing what they want"

Nicholas Ridley - R.I.P.

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Freedom & Public Policy

By Prof. Peter Campbell

PROFESSOR CAMPBELL'S brief talk on 31 March was intended to prompt a discussion within the Society and amongst readers of *The Individual* about the Society's attitude to freedom in respect of certain issues about which it is clear that strongly conflicting views are held amongst libertarians.

He thought that there was a strong consensus within the Society in favour of the free market economy - free trade in goods and services (although many people might oppose allowing free trade in labour to result in such substantial immigration that national identity and cohesion would be endangered); the role of the state in economic matters should be confined to providing certain necessary substructures and to promoting the good working of the market by penalising fraud, manipulation, and the provision of sub-standard goods and services. Practical problems might arise (for example, at what point does the necessary effort to promote the good working of the market become excessive, as some would say has happened in respect of the regulation of financial services) but there seemed to be no conflict on matters of principle. Similarly there seemed to be agreement also on returning to the market the provision of services such as

education, health care and pensions; for certain services vouchers financed by public funds might be necessary.

In some fields there were natural conflicts of interests or between libertarian principles. One example is covered by the media's treatment of the privacy of the individual, whether the privacy of people with public responsibilities (such as the heir to the throne, politicians, surgeons and priests) or that of 'ordinary' law-abiding people. Another example is the claim of the state to privacy for some of the processes by which its servants develop their decisions and conduct their authorised business. Against the right to privacy can be set freedom of speech and the right to know. On the whole, however, in these fields the participants in the debates on the proper limits of freedom share a good deal of ground and can hope to find acceptable practical compromises.

Such compromises may be less feasible in respect of issues which arouse strong moral and/or religious feelings, for example sexual behaviour, sexually arousing publications (whether in print, film, television, video or radio), abortion, euthanasia, blasphemy, divorce and many drugs. It has often happened that many

people (particularly politicians and journalists) who are normally in favour of extending freedom in the economic sphere become very hostile to extending it in these matters. Their hostility is sometimes of a pragmatic kind: they fear that the proposed extension will have serious harmful effects on those who use their new freedom or on other persons or on society's capacity to sustain civilised behaviour. Professor Campbell stated that arguments about pragmatic problems played an important part in the development of public opinion on such issues in the 1950s and 1960s and produced the compromise 'permissive' legislation of that period. However, Professor Campbell argued that hostility to the extension of freedom in these matters is often based on restrictive or even repressive religious beliefs which are not negotiable like pragmatic considerations and which may, of course, be held by people who favour extending freedom in the economic sphere. Professor Campbell thought that the problems involved in tackling these issues should be considered by the Society.

The discussion at the meeting tended to be in favour of boldness when a strong case was made for extending freedom in these 'moral' fields. Readers are invited to send their views to the Editor of *The Individual*.

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Business Ethics, Prosperity & Liberty

By Prof. Norman Barry

THE COLLAPSE OF communism has not reduced the critical pressures with which capitalism and the forces of economic freedom have to contend. If anything the anti-capitalist intellectual movement has become more dangerous because its attacks have become more subtle. The basic elements of market society are no longer challenged but certain radical ideas, if successfully implemented into law, will make its operation less felicitous and its outcomes less prosperous. I refer specifically to "business ethics" - a subject pioneered in America but which is now finding a favourable reception in Britain. It is a threat to business freedom.

Social Responsibility

In essence, business ethics subjects commercial practices to particularly severe ethical standards; it purports to impose on business agents moral duties and legal restrictions which would not be acceptable if they applied to ordinary citizens. I illustrate from two particular areas: the alleged "social responsibility" of business and the law and practice of financial markets.

Business corporations are not now to be solely concerned with profits, with securing the highest returns to their stockholders and hence increasing consumer satisfaction and ultimately, employment, but are to engage in *socially* desirable activity. Thus they must pursue "fair" employment practices (which means, affirmative action) even if that makes them less efficient; they should not relocate plant if that would cause local unemployment, even if such action reduces profitability and causes unemployment elsewhere; they should show excessive concern for the environment, even if that means going beyond the demands of law and the normal requirement of reimbursing parties whose interests are illegitimately damaged by commerce; and managements should donate stockholders' money to the arts and other worthy causes. These are just a few of the items from an ever-expanding list of non-economic demands made on business.

Of course, no one would deny that business corporations should behave in a manner consistent with ordinary morality; but to impose the above duties

on them can only fetter unnecessarily commercial enterprise, to the ultimate detriment of all in society. Furthermore, such activity poses a threat to property relations. The assets of a corporation are owned by the stockholders. They are not a common good to be distributed to worthy ends by self-appointed spokesmen for the public interest. It is no surprise that the managements of corporations should be quite enthusiastic about so-called corporate responsibility. For this distracts them from the more onerous activity of managing company assets to the benefits of the owners, the stockholders. It must be remembered that the latter ultimately include ordinary, non-wealthy sections of society, e.g. pensioners and insurance policy-holders.

Altruism

Of course there can be no objection if the owners of a business enterprise genuinely wish to sacrifice profitability for the sake of social ends. There is plenty of historical evidence of this anyway. But to coerce by law, or more insidiously, by public opinion, such altruism can only cause long-term damage to an economy. It is, in effect, a license for corporate managements to usurp the role of gov-

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ernment and to neglect the interests of owners, of whom they are, quite simply, the agents.

Financial markets are something of any easy target for the critics of business. Here there have been spectacular scandals, criminal wrong-doing and often ostentatious displays of greed. Still, only the most Neanderthal of socialists would deny their necessity if capital is to be allocated efficiently and prices are to reflect scarcities. We must disregard the pious evaluation of motives here and recognise the paramountcy of *utility*. We could even absorb the lessons of Bernard Mandeville's notorious *Fable of the Bees*, in which he praised the beneficial effects of pure self-interest. He writes of the non-moral beehive:

*Every part was full of vice
Yet the whole mass an earthly
paradise.*

It is because of the possibility of vast profits in securities markets that greed is a likely motivation. This is why criminal laws against fraud and deceit have to be rigorously enforced. However, in the US and in Britain the law here is so vague, and its enforcement so unpredictable, that financial personnel, and intermediaries, would have to behave like saints to avoid the taint of illegality and immorality. And such saintlike behaviour would produce inefficiency.

The law against "insider dealing" is a case in point. Information is at a premium in financial

markets and a person with prior knowledge can make huge gains. Yet so complex and so vague are the disclosure rules that it is difficult for an agent to know if he is illicitly dealing or not. There is a serious question as to why company employees should be forbidden by law to trade on undisclosed information. There is little or no historical evidence to suggest that stockholders ever objected to the practice. Instead, we have tough statutes that make almost any financial activity that involves the use of scarce information highly suspect.

Level Playing Fields

All this has been justified by reference to the need for a "level playing field" in financial markets. But this is an impossibility in a world in which information is inevitably scarce and unequally shared. It is right that rewards should go to those people most alert to the profitable opportunities to which that information can be put. After all, this is how we behave in our daily activities. Why should businessmen be subject to "higher" standards of morality?

Milken - Market Hero

The protagonists of business ethics are remarkably inattentive to the unethical practices of prosecuting authorities in their pursuit of alleged criminals in financial markets. There is no better example of this than the persecution in the US of Michael Milken, the phenomenally suc-

cessful investment banker and bond dealer. Through his innovative financial instruments, and his astute eye for business prospects, many US enterprises were able to get off the ground. Also, his financing of necessary takeovers brought about an essential restructuring of American industry in the 1980s.

Yet his success frightened the Wall Street financial establishment and provoked hostility from power hungry prosecuting authorities. All sorts of devices (including the monstrous Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organisations Act: a tough statute originally aimed at the Mafia) were used to extract a "plea bargain" from him. He was originally sentenced to ten years imprisonment (later reduced to two years) for minor regulatory infractions. But given the complexity of the regulations it is difficult not to breach them.

The excessive zeal of business ethicists, and the legislators they inspire, is no doubt fuelled by the distaste they feel for the main motivation of business activity, namely self-interest. But this is no less prevalent in other spheres, especially politics. The current demands for business ethics are driven by a certain kind of moral vanity, i.e. the admiration that the non-business persons give to themselves for their allegedly purer motives. It is what Mandeville called "posturing". Its implementation in law and public policy is, however, a threat to freedom and prosperity.

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Access to Medical Information

By Peter Jackson

READERS MAY BE wondering what progress has been made towards the goal of full and frank information being made available to patients since their combined efforts resulted in fourteen MPs from four political parties putting their names to an Early Day Motion in Parliament.

At the moment the *Patients Charter* lays an apparent cover over the real gaps in the law giving information to patients which when tested the citizen falls through. For information to be properly provided to patients, changes are needed in the three following areas.

1. The Patients Charter

The *Patients Charter* is a guide and not enshrined in law. On this subject it states that every citizen has the right:

"to be given a clear explanation of any treatment proposed, including any risks and any alternatives before you decide whether you agree to the treatment;

"to have access to your health records, and to know that those working for the NHS are under a legal duty to keep their contents confidential;

also:

"Information to relatives and friends. The Charter Standard is that the health authorities should ensure that there are arrangements to inform your relatives and friends about the progress of your treatment subject, of course, to your wishes."

These are well intentioned sentiments which need to be extended to enable people to appoint a representative (a Scrutineer) when they find they are unable to obtain information personally.

2. The Law on Information on Adverse Effects

People whose cases were set out in an earlier copy of *"The Individual"* would have had no redress from the law even if we had had access to all the necessary evidence as to what happened. This is because the law on this subject is based on the judgement of the House of Lords in the case of *Sidaway v Gov. of Bethlehem Royal Hospital (1985)* and would have upheld the doctors in concealing potential risks and after effects.

From this judgement we can see that a health practitioner may disclose whatever he or she wishes regarding the risks of a proposed treatment so long as this is in line with the usual practice of a respon-

sible body of such practitioners, regardless of whether another body of such practitioners takes a completely contrary view.

Nothing was known of the state of mind of the patient in the case concerned because the practitioner had died in the meantime and his notes did not cover this point. However the whole judgement rested on making the assumption that she had been in a mental state in which the normal practice would be not to inform her that the operation had a 1% chance of damage to the spinal cord: and that such damage results in adverse effects which range from constant pins and needles to total disablement.

The one exception that Lord Bridge gave to the above was where there is as much as 10% risk of adverse consequences, such as a stroke from an operation: in that case a warning must be given by the practitioner. Other than where there is such an enormous risk factor, assessment by the doctor of the mental condition of the patient is crucial as to whether to tell him or her what risks exist.

What is relevant is that no evidence was available as to the surgeon's opinion on this and if notes are to be any evidential value they have to demonstrate the reasons for a course of action whether or not the practitioner is there to give them.

Since assessments of the mental and emotional condition of a patient would appear to be the fundamental factor in such as medical

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decision, one would assume notes on assessment to be a vital record of any case.

Unfortunately, any doctor who wishes to save himself future embarrassment can leave out his assessment and as in this case leave it to the benevolence of the court to interpret it as well meaning.

The assumption is that the doctor decides in the patient's best interests. If a doctor leaves out his assessment of the individual's state of mind the assumption of the judges is that he did it in the patient's best interests. But only if the assumption is written can contrary evidence be brought.

The Law Lords did not do or say anything about ensuring that the doctor makes relevant notes as to his assessment of the mental state of his patient. Lord Scarman does say that it is dangerous that a legal duty is based on a medical assessment but he makes it clear that the Right to Know is not enshrined in law in this country. Nevertheless this right is not extended by this ruling, nor does it clarify what is or is not the desirable mental state for a patient to have the Right to Know about possible adverse effects of a proposed treatment.

This ruling also shows a weakness of the current law in that Access to Medical Records only makes available records showing what was actually done, eg. "*amputation of the left leg*", because we can see from this basic case that they do not have to record why an action was taken. "Why" not "what" is the question to which most people want to know the answer.

What is needed in law is:

a) The patient should have the right to know or the right to have a representative in the form of a Scrutineer.

b) The practioner should tell the patient everything about his treatment that a practioner himself would wish to know if he was in that position.

c) Practioners should be obliged to include in the notes reasons why a treatment is chosen and reasons why any such information was withheld.

3. Information Given By Government to Practioners

The Minister, through the Committee on Safety in Medicines (CSM), only holds information of the dangerousness of medicines in use at a very late stage and after a large number of people have suffered. This is because of the way such information is obtained. First the CSM must decide from the numbers of harmful side effects reported that there is a definite probability of risk with the product. It is only at that point that they ask the manufacturer for usage data. Only then can the number of possible side effects reported be evaluated as to the degree of risk because that is the first time they know the proportion of adverse effects.

As the manufacturers are the only people who know the approximate numbers treated, the onus should be on them to provide CSM with ongoing proof of the safety of their products so as to justify a continuing license. In the notorious thalidomide case, prescriptions continued to be issued for many months after the product had been banned

in several other European countries where the dangers and damage were well known. These facts must have been in the hands of the drug manufacturers over a period when irreparable damage was done to an enormous number of babies.

According to the Dept. of Health Statistics Information Division, the yearly figure for 1989-90 individual ECT treatments stands at 106,000 but it is impossible to find out how many individuals this involves. Astonishingly, therefore, they have no real knowledge of the long term effects of this controversial treatment.

When government bodies with their enormous statistical departments do not hold such information they cannot inform the practioners of dangers and the practioners in turn cannot inform their patients.

Full access to information is essential for responsible decisions and we must ask for the law and then the practice to catch up with the limited but well intentioned sentiments of the *Patients' Charter*.

For this to be corrected it is suggested that for Government statistics:

a) Drug Companies should report annually the percentages of adverse effects for each drug and attest to its safety and request the license be renewed.

b) In each case the controversial medical interventions reporting of adverse effects over a two year period should be provided by practioners to enable the ministry to keep relevant statistical information regarding dangers.

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The Threat of Euro-Corporatism

By Rodney Atkinson

RODNEY ATKINSON, author of many books and pamphlets about freedom, the state, and European Federalism, spoke to the Society on 24th February about Corporatism in Britain and Europe.

In the course of his address Mr. Atkinson gave many examples of the stubborn persistence of Corporatism in Britain, where sectional interests continue their efforts to gain privileged positions by exploiting their political influence. He showed how similar influences are strong both within the other member-states of the EEC and within the Council of Ministers and the Brussels bureaucracy. Corporatism has long been practised in most of the other member-states, particularly where the economic role of the state has long been substantial (as in France) and where Roman Catholic ideas about co-operation between government and industry are influential (as in several states - the German concept of the *Social Market* is to some extent the latest version of such ideas). The Thatcher Government's policy of reducing the economic role of the

state was not fully applied and has been partly reversed; it has had no parallel elsewhere in the Community.

The Single European Act

The prospects for a truly competitive capitalism in which the consumer's interests are determinant are therefore endangered. The Single European Act involved the most radical change in British constitutional law since 1688 and yet probably not one citizen in 10,000 was even aware of its passage into law, never mind the political implications of its provisions. Economic Statism at home and social manipulations in Brussels are having profound but unseen effects not just on economic health but on the body politic and the entire existence of the nation State - without even a semblance of political accountability or democratic justification.

The Erosion of Sovereignty

Parliament has been seriously undermined by the covert surrender of the British people's

sovereignty to another Parliament or even worse, to the European Commission. The British people no longer know who is governing them. Few decisions in business, or even Government can now be taken in Parliament without looking for a second - and overriding - decision from "Europe". Can the British power industry use gas for electricity generation or will the EC insist on the traditional view that gas is too noble a fuel? Will the UK Governments classification of methane gas as a non fossil fuel be upheld in Brussels? Can gin bottles be square (as in Britain) or must they be round as on the continent? Areas of legislation which could never affect European free trade have nevertheless been removed from the full control of national parliaments - including the British - to control by Brussels, where decisions will be determined by cosy arrangements made by privileged pressure groups and electoral considerations of national governments and of MEPs, all appealing to the lowest common denominator.

True & False Democracy

Basing public policy on the lowest common denominator is a natural tendency of *political* democracy. That true democracy lies in the freedom and

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responsibility of individuals, families, communities and nations (rather than committees, parties, Governments and States) is not an attractive proposition to politicians.

Shared Cultural Values

The tendency towards the lowest common denominator is particularly accentuated when the electorate has no cultural or linguistic unity. The less people share cultural values and a common understanding the only way even the more reputable politicians can assemble a large majority is to descend into the gutter of political, economic, racial or national resentments.

In a "European Community" of 12 nations, 9 languages and many different experiences of and attitudes towards democracy the temptation for politicians to unite their electorate in the lowest common denominators of protectionism, social resentment, class hatred and political bigotry will be too great to resist.

Federalism & Peace

Those who see in a "European Union" or Federal Europe a source of peace and a guarantee against the recurrence of war, should consider the history of Federalism. The fires of war which started in Europe and engulfed the world in the first half of the 20th century were lit by Germany and Italy - two unsta-

ble federal amalgamations of individual states.

Managing Federalism

Federal Governments always have difficulty in raising taxes from the individual states over which they rule. Even in Germany and Italy where the separate states spoke the same language, the federal Governments were unable to collect taxes to finance the federal bureaucracies and political institutions which the state, not the people, had constructed. Federal systems, unlike nation states, enjoy no organic loyalty and there is therefore no common purpose which will justify sacrifice for the common good.

In Germany and Italy the tax raising failure of federal Government led to even larger budget deficits, massive borrowing and then money printing and inflation. Out of this Federalist chaos arose Fascism, racial hatred and European war. Today in Italy the separatist Lombard League is threatening to withhold tax payments from the federal Government, seeing no "common purpose" in financing the poorer southern regions of Italy.

Euro-Federalism

We see the identical situation in the embryo Federal Europe with enormous expenditure planned by a central bureaucracy for an amalgam of 12 separate states, speaking 10 different languages

(without even a common public opinion, never mind an organic loyalty) and a varied (!) experience of democratic government. We already see Germany refusing to contribute more funds and demanding cuts in the British budget rebate. Britain, with a budget deficit of over 30 billion and a balance of payments deficit of 12 billion (even more with EC countries) is in no mood to pay for what Euro-politicians (elected by less than 30% of the electorate) have planned.

The Return of the 1930s?

The ERM has brought about high and long term unemployment, the Maastricht Treaty has threatened national identity and Brussels has imposed alienating central controls. The stage is set, with Communist and neo-Nazi riots in Germany, Italy and France for a return of the 1930's - as a result of deliberate policy choices by politicians embarking on yet another Federalist adventure.

Editorial note: *This report has been compiled by an SIF member from his notes about Mr. Atkinson's talk and from Mr. Atkinson's earlier treatment of the topic.*

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THE SIXTIES' TELEVISION series, *The Prisoner*, has recently enjoyed a re-run on Channel 4. The programme, some 25 years old, has earned cult status amongst the viewing public despite its obvious philosophical content. Glenn Granger examines some of the issues and decides that *The Prisoner* is a remarkable defence of Individualism and deserves our attention.

The Prisoner was broadcast in 1967, seventeen hour-long episodes in which ideas usually consigned to books of philosophy were screened on prime time network television. The actor, writer and director of this fascinating series was Patrick McGoochan, who while finishing off another popular sixties' show *Danger Man* was busy planning *The Prisoner*. Each episode was a self contained unit, though each could be integrated into the general theme: the struggle of the individual against the state. The opening episode, "Arrival", launches us into this daring and revolutionary series.

Our hero, Patrick McGoochan, resigns, in a fit of rage, from his post in the secret service. He returns to his London flat and while hastily packing his bags is abducted by a group of men whose identity or purpose of action is never revealed. He awakes to find himself in a candy coated village. On asking for information about the village he is simply told by the locals that this is the 'Village'. Incidentally,

The Cult of the Individual

By Glenn Granger

the 'Village' is the first of many common concepts used to illustrate the wider meaning of the series. The 'Village' is not simply a village but a representation of the world at large. *The Prisoner* uses a number of familiar terms to prevent ambiguities caused by overly subtle metaphors.

Number 6, as Mr McGoochan is now known, is shocked, distressed and angered by his new environment. He has become a prisoner in this brightly coloured place where the other inhabitants (everyone has a number) are mindless automatons, living dull, passionless lives. The character of Number 6 stands in stark contrast to these passive people. He is aggressive, antagonistic and non-conformist. His physical gestures are like those of a caged animal - defiant and wild.

Enter Number 2, the genial camp commandant. This mandarin figure, wearing an Oxbridge college scarf, is played by a different actor in each episode and represents, I suppose, the ever present but faceless bureaucratic elite.

In each episode the current Number 2 engages in a battle of wits with Number 6. The goal is information. Why did Number 6 resign? This question in itself seems incidental, the real issue is the right of Number 6 to the privacy of his own mind. The reasons for his resignation are his, and his alone. It is interesting to note that Number 6 is never beaten during the assaults on his mind, but is always thwarted while trying to escape from the village. This is a theme which runs throughout and is the glimmer of hope the series offers, that total domination is still beyond the capability of the authorities.

The final episode seems to provide no tangible answers. This was intentional. Patrick McGoochan, the driving force behind the project, wanted the series to promote discussion and stimulate thought. He saw the issues as too complex to glibly 'explain' at the end, instead we are left to make our own interpretations. So, what does *The Prisoner* mean?

The Prisoner is concerned with the age old battle between

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Individualism and Collectivism. Freedom and Coercion. Good and Evil.

Number 2 expresses this sentiment most clearly when he tells Number 6, "*You are a member of the Village. You are a unit of society.*"

The collectivist view of society is quite clear. A tiny cog in a large machine existing only to keep the machine working. Number 2 makes no attempt to explain the purpose of such a sterile society and a justification for it's continued existence appears pitifully lacking. Indeed, the village is perfectly 'nice' in a mundane sort of way and the inhabitants seem to need no explanation for it's numerous rules and regulations. These people truly are fish in a goldfish bowl. In creating this backdrop for the series, *The Prisoner* takes a damning swipe at the great mass of people content to live such lives.

Number 6 is different. He is not passive. He is rebellious. He is not timid. He is defiant. He is not dependent. He is independent. In fact his proud, independent, upright character could have walked straight off the pages of an Ayn Rand novel. If this was the intention, then an obvious question follows. Who is Number 1? In the title sequence number 6 asks "*Who is Number 1?*", a voice tells him "*You are Number 6*". A mystery? Not if we add some punctuation. "*Who is Number 1? You are, Number*

6." Perhaps then, the Randian concept of selfishness? At the very least there seems evidence to support the basic Libertarian axiom of self ownership. The series is laden with dialogue from Number 6 extolling the virtues of individualism.

"*You are a wicked man, have you no values?*", Number 6 replies "*Different values.*"

No. 2: "*The village is the perfect blueprint for Worldorder. I hope the whole world becomes as the village. What's your hope?*"

No. 6: "*I want to be the first man on the moon.*"

No. 6: "*I will not make any deals with you. I've resigned. I will not be pushed, filed, stamped, indexed, briefed, debriefed or numbered. My life is my own.*"

Of course the corollary of such strident individualism, of independence of mind is a rejection of the psychological school of Behaviourism championed by B.F. Skinner. (The series was making a contemporary dig at Skinner who was at his height in the 1960's). Number 2 uses a whole host of brain-washing techniques and drugs to try and control Number 6 but without success. Number 6 retains his identity. His body is imprisoned, his mind survives. In Skinner's novel, *Walden Two*, the character T.E. Frazier lectures that "*We not only can control human behaviour, we must.*" *The*

Prisoner emphatically rejects both parts of this proposition and through Number 6 asserts "*I am not a number. I am a free man.*"

The purpose of the series forms one of the great debates amongst *Prisoner* devotees. Was it to explore the nature of modern man set against his largely collectivist environment or to provide an agenda for political action. The two are inseparable for thinking individuals, to think without acting, is a betrayal of the very mind that defines your identity, a point *The Prisoner* is determined to convey.

It is important to note that *The Prisoner* does not envision any type of Utopia. Instead, it highlights the perpetual struggle between the individual and society. If the individual fights, he or she is guaranteed only that the war will continue, there is no question or hope that the war can be won. If the individual doesn't fight, however, the war is over; the individual loses, and the future looks very bleak. Orwell's line about the future being like "*a boot stamping on a human face - forever*" seems to be the danger call of *The Prisoner*. These issues are real enough. Needless to say, they should not be forgotten.

**All 17 episodes of The Prisoner are now available on video cassette.*

The Individual



Book Reviews

Testing the Market

Robert Carnaghan & Barry
Bracewell-Milnes
(£14.95, IEA, 2 Lord North
Street, London, SW1P 3LB)

The Institute of Economic Affairs has recently published *Testing the Market: Competitive Tendering in Britain & Abroad* (Research Monograph 49) by Robert Carnaghan & Barry Bracewell-Milnes, two members of the Society for Individual Freedom.

The book reviews the experience of competitive tendering for government services, which the authors show has largely been a success story. In conclusion, ten recommendations are made to further the competitive tendering programme. These radical proposals include a small pilot scheme for the tendering out of hospital management, the investigation by the Audit Commission of local authorities who have failed to operate tendering programmes and the gradual implementation of tendering to the fire services and some elements of policing.

This book is strong on detail whilst remaining bold in ideas - the Government would do well to take up these proposals.

God & the Marketplace

Jon Davies (Editor)
(£4.90, IEA Health & Welfare
Unit, 2 Lord North Street,
London, SW1P 3LB)

Is capitalism morally acceptable? There are many church leaders who would answer with an unequivocal "No". Do such claims reflect the inadequacy of the church's thinking about capitalism? Are there fundamental moral problems about the enterprise of wealth creation that have yet to be confronted?

This series of essays on the morality of wealth creation contains contributions from a number of academics, clergymen (Roman Catholic, Anglican & Methodist). The opening essay is by the distinguished theologian Professor Michael Novak, author of *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*.

The tennets of economic and political liberalism are shown to be compatible with Christian theology. Max Webber went as far as to identify "Protestant ethics" as the driving force behind capitalism. The hostility to capitalism shown by some contemporary Church leaders perhaps reveals just as much the established churches' ditching of true Christianity as well as their rejection of capitalism?

The Power to Destroy

Prof. David Myddelton
(£7.95 for SIF members £9.95
non-members, SIF, 56-60 St.
John St., London EC1M 4DT)

The Society for Individual Freedom is about to start publishing a series of books and pamphlets - The Armour Papers - on issues concerning freedom. The series has been made possible by the very generous legacy of a long-standing member of the Society, the late Alan Marsh Armour, of Manchester. The first Armour Paper, to be published in May, is *The Power to Destroy: A Study of the British Tax System* by David Myddelton, Professor of Finance and Accounting at the Cranfield Institute of Technology and a Vice-President of the Society.

The Power to Destroy shows how extensively taxes reduce the freedom of the individual and harm the free market economy. Professor Myddelton makes important proposals to simplify the tax system, reduce its burden on individuals and companies, improve the incentives to create wealth, cut government spending and substantially reduce the proportion of the national income which the government confiscates by taxation.